(b) if so, number of such cases during the last 3 years, year-wise and country-wise;

(c) the details of the efforts made by Government to locate such officials and to ascertain motives behind their disappearance; and

(d) the fresh steps taken by Government to check misuse of diplomatic passports and to strictly follow the passport manual in case of officials working in Indian Missions abroad?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) Specific instructions have been issued by the Ministry to Missions/ Posts abroad for : (i) limiting the validity of the passports of the officials in conformity with the normal period of posting; (ii) not rendering any consular service to the officials other than providing an Emergency Certificate to return to India in cases of their unauthorized stay abroad; and (iii) impounding of the passports in cases of desertions/unauthorized stay in foreign countries.

Treaty on Biological Warfare

2663. DR. RAJA RAMANNA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that India signed and ratified a UN treaty on biological warfare sometime ago;

(b) whether this was done in haste as the country faces danger to its security by the unrestricted development of weapon grade bio-materials in many countries; and

(c) if so, whether the possibility of withdrawing from the treaty has to be considered ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The only treaty in the field of bio-warfare is the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). The BTWC was multilaterally negotiated, and India took part in these, at the conclusion of which it was opened for signature in 1972. India ratified the BTWC in 1974 and has been a State Party since then.

(c) Does not arise.